

TESTIMONY OF
MIKE KNAPP
VICE PRESIDENT,
MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL

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House Ways and Means Committee

Madam Chair, Members of the Committee, it is an honor to be with you today. My name is Mike Knapp, and I am the Montgomery County Councilmember representing the Upcounty region of Montgomery County – an area that has a very real interest in and need for mass transit options. I also serve as the Council's Vice President for its current session, serve as the Vice Chairman of the Greater Washington Council of Government, and am the immediate past-Chairman of COG's Transportation Planning Board (TPB).

One of my goals as a Councilmember is to encourage, and hopefully ensure, that our region adequately invests in transportation infrastructure, and especially in mass transit options. In the Washington capitol region and Maryland in particular, we have work to do to overcome investments in transit that have traditionally lagged behind our overwhelming demand – I know I don't have to tell you that. I am committed to working with you, and with our colleagues in Virginia and Washington, D.C., to find reasonable and innovative ways of making that happen.

Last year, TPB analyzed the various causes of traffic congestion and looked at trends that contributed to traffic snarls. From there, we were able to identify a number of potential scenarios that could result in decreased congestion, and recommend possible solutions, which were published in the TPB's Regional Mobility and Accessibility Scenario Study. The report's conclusion, simply put, is: mass transit matters. It matters a lot for all of our state's residents. Almost any plan we might come up with to encourage smarter growth, more creative planning, and better air quality depends on a good mass transit system.

Providing an increased source of funding for mass transit, then, is critical to helping us achieve our goals in supporting mass transit and building better communities. For that reason, I strongly support the bills before you, as well as any reasonable measures that would provide for increased funding for mass transit. It is critical that Maryland make such an investment.

Metro, for example, is a great success, but with every day that goes by that there aren't sufficient operating funds, we put its future success at risk. Presently, Maryland's Congressional Delegation is cosponsoring Congressman Tom Davis of Virginia's legislation to authorize additional Federal funding for Metro and WMATA – but that legislation is contingent on a commitment from the various jurisdictions that they will obligate state funding as well. Last year, only the District was able to approve legislation for additional funding. I am hoping all three jurisdictions will do so this year. The bills before you would help Maryland meet the criteria for release of these funds for funding Metro.

But that's not all -- the revenue that would be generated and collected by these initiatives can be put to good and immediate use in communities around the state. These additional resources can be used to jump-start new, critical projects like the Corridor Cities Transitway in Montgomery and Frederick counties, the Bi-County Transitway for Prince Georges and Montgomery County, and the proposed Red and Green lines in Baltimore. Each of these projects could immediately benefit from the increased investments these bills would provide – but funding could also be used to improve or create new mass transit systems anywhere in the state, from the far reaches of Garrett county to the tip of Worcester. We have communities throughout the state with a variety of transportation needs that haven't been addressed, because they never believed the resources would be available to help them pursue such projects. With these bills, such resources would be available. It's time to make such revenue available.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak with you today. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.